**Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs**

Defra Group Management Consultancy Framework: Project Engagement Letter

Completed forms and any queries should be directed to Defra Group Commercial at
███████████████████

| Engagement details			
Engagement ref #	DPEL_61541_052		
Extension?	N	**DPEL Ref.**	N/A
Business Area	Marine and Fisheries		
Programme / Project	Marine NCEA		
Senior Responsible Officer	██████████		
Supplier	Methods Business and Digital Technology Ltd		
Title	Marine NCEA Programme Management Services		
Short description	Digital User Research		
Engagement start / end date	Proposed start date 21/11/2022		Proposed end date 30/01/2023
Funding source	CDEL		
Consultancy Spend approval reference			
Expected costs 22/23	£91,110		
Expected costs 23/24	£0		
Expected costs 24/25	£0		
Dept. PO reference			
Lot #	Lot 3		
Version #	V1.0		

Approval of Project Engagement Letter

By signing and returning this cover note, the Portfolio Directorate accepts the contents of this Project Engagement Letter as being the services required and agrees for Methods to provide the services in accordance with the agreed Supplier Proposal under the overarching contract (Lot 3 - Ref 28595), with Defra Group and confirms the availability of funding to support recharge for the services.

Signatures

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE - COMMERCIAL

Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs
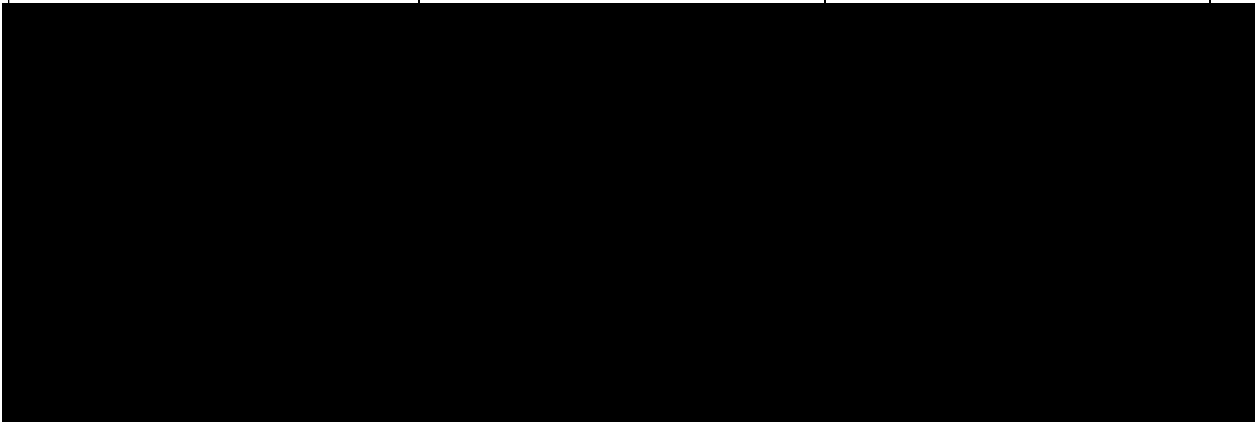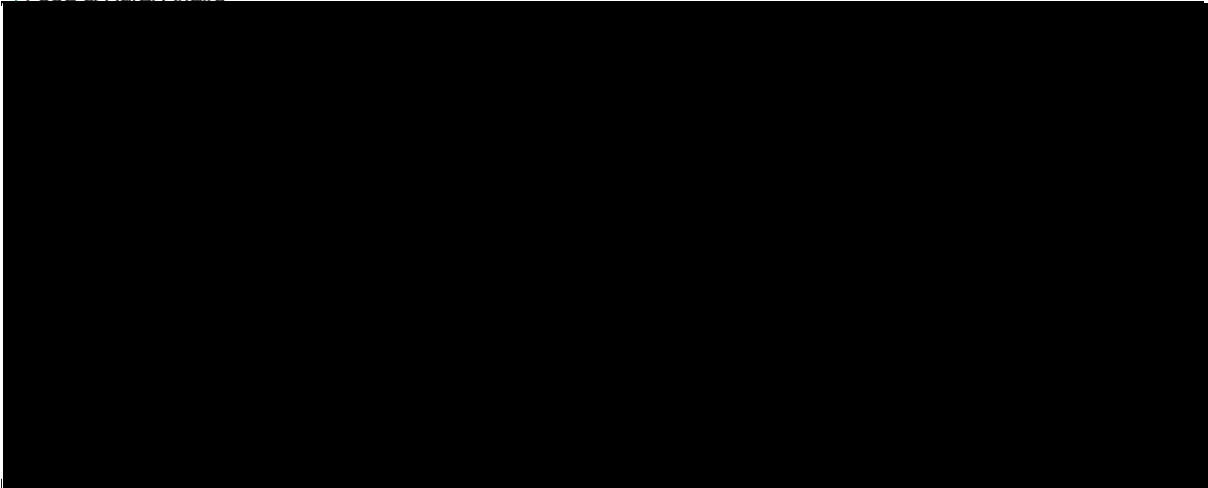
T
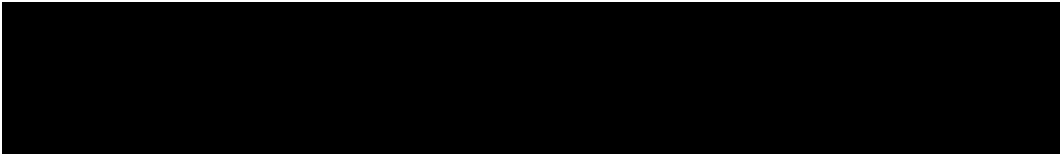
General Instructions

The Engagement Letter describes the services required and provided. When completing the Engagement Letter establish the context, explain why external support is required and distinguish between the objectives, outcomes, scope, and deliverables. The rationale behind the costs should be made evident in the Fees section.

The Business Area considerations are guidance notes for the customer to support their evaluation of the Engagement Letter.

Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

1. Background

The Marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment (mNCEA) programme will provide up-todate and transformative data regarding the status of the UK's marine environment, to support the delivery of key Ministerial priorities, including the 25-year environment plan, the UK Marine Strategy, Fisheries Act and the Environment Bill. For the UK to achieve these ambitions, rapid changes are required.

Between January - April 2022, DEFRA's DDTS team completed a high-level pre-discovery to develop an early understanding around the challenges users face when trying to access and use marine natural capital data in order to help make timely, robust decisions. Across this engagement (including JNCC Ecosystem assessment tools workshops and interviews with stakeholders from the Offshore Wind Better Data Project), the team learnt that:

- Users found it difficult to find data to aid in their decision-making process.
- Once users found data, there were questions around its validity, quality and when it was last updated.

- Users felt that license conditions were often unclear, creating uncertainty around whether or not they were permitted to access and use the data they needed. Access to some data were restricted due to being behind a paywall.
- Some data are only provided in modelled or processed formats, restricting re-usability.
- There are a number of data catalogues already being used including Marine Environmental Data and Information Network (MEDIN) where some work is already happening to improve metadata standards.
- Some users knew about the DEFRA metadata catalogue which pulls information about data sources in one place but it wasn't clear how often this was used or whether this tool meets user needs.

This high-level pre-discovery exercise only tapped into a small segment of the overall user profile, so it was recommended that next steps assess the range of users. The mNCEA digital solution will need to cater for a broad range of user groups, covering customers from both within and external to Defra, and both technical and non-technical in nature.

As part of the wider mNCEA Programme, JNCC are exploring options around the development of a marine asset service matrix to be used to demonstrate the links between natural assets, including habitats and species, and the ecosystem services that they provide. It is hypothesised that particular groups of users could use such a product to help them take a natural capital approach. After recently progressing through DEFRA Service Assessments for other digital products, JNCC colleagues have acknowledged that robust user research activity needs to be conducted as part of this project. This will enable the team to evidence whether there are clear, identified user needs that this product will meet and will determine any work on the product going forward. The intention is that this user research will be broad enough to cover all digital projects that JNCC will produce over the course of the mNCEA programme, as they will be aimed at similar user groups. JNCC will therefore be looking to test broader hypotheses about user needs for digital products, and not specifically focused on the Asset Service Matrix.

As such there is a clear and urgent requirement for Marine NCEA user research, to better understand the user requirements (and gaps) from mNCEA's digital exploration work, and the development of the marine Asset Service Matrix. As there is some overlap in Marine NCEA stakeholders between these two needs, it makes sense to combine the early analysis and interviews, which will focus on shared user groups. The intention would then be for the broader mNCEA user research to continue, expanding to a broader range of user groups or testing a wider range of hypotheses.

Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

2. Statement of services

Objectives and outcomes to be achieved

Research goal
We'll conduct user research in order to understand in more detail what mNCEA (and JNCC) users do now. This will include:

mNCEA programme specific:
- clarifying where they go to find data and what problems they face when searching for data
- What problems or barriers users face when accessing data
- how users currently try to use data and what barriers they face
- what the issues are and the pain points they experience whilst trying to take a natural capital approach.
- What problems users face when trying to integrate data from different sources
- What analytical challenges users face
- Where do data owners store data and what issues they have relating to data storage

For both mNCEA and JNCC:
- Who are the potential users of natural capital digital tools and services
- Where these users currently go to meet their needs
- What problems these users face with finding/using existing resources

We will also explore how much users understand about natural capital – this will help to identify the level of support or change needed to support users. This research will help us build up the evidence we need to identify how current tools and systems meet / do not meet the needs of users, helping us check against early assumptions/hypotheses that previous research has established.

Scope

Research methods
We will be conducting desk research during the first two weeks of the project. This will help to develop our initial understanding of relevant user groups and inform research questions for the qualitative and quantitative phases of the project.

We will run a series of semi-structured one-to-one interviews followed by surveys. Semi structured interviews enable us to focus on areas of inquiry, making sure we gain insight that directly supports our project goal whilst not being too rigid to allow the participant to share what is important to them. Surveys, based on initial findings from the semi structured interviews, enable us to engage with a larger sample of users which will make any research findings more robust.

Interviews
We propose to initially access participants for user research interviews, using identified stakeholder groups, from particular priority areas. Whilst some work will be required with the team to finalise these user groups, we want to understand the needs of technical and non-technical users who could use natural capital data throughout different stages including:
- understanding the condition and extent of natural assets ☐   determining any services rendered by these assets
- determining a monetary value for assets.

With this in mind, our priority user base is likely to be made up of:

Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

- internal government users such as colleagues within DEFRA policy teams and Arms Length Bodies (ALBs)
- external users including academics, non-governmental organisations and the Crown Estate.

Insight from these interviews will shape user research with a wider user audience via surveys. Depending on clarification around the targeting of user groups, we should be looking to recruit a sample of 20-25 participants. Interviews are likely to be up to 60 minutes long. This is an estimate and subject to change to ensure we get a robust sample within the timeframe that enables the team to make an informed decision about how to progress.

We will consider how we access users from different demographic backgrounds, using any data available to support in developing a representative sample as much as possible.

We will pull together a consent form, information sheet and discussion guide to help the researcher get the most out of interviews whilst making sure we conduct the interview with informed consent from the participant.

The focus of these research interviews will be to:
- understand the as-is for the participant
- establish what the participant needs to take a natural capital approach.

We'd want colleagues within the core project team to participate and/or observe within these interviews alongside any user researcher, building a team understanding of user needs.

We will have access to Subject Matter Experts where appropriate to support in the research in the development of discussion guides and the analysis and synthesis process to support the research in understanding technical language.

Surveys

We plan to use surveys that can be sent to a wide range of user groups via email, potentially using contacts and user engagement mechanisms from key stakeholders. The focus of the survey will be to:

- establish any clear differences between user needs already identified
- act as a mechanism to help recruit new potential user research participants for future rounds of user research activity (if appropriate, as long as informed consent is given to use participant data in that way).

Knowledge Transfer

As well as producing the agreed deliverables, Methods will upskill and provide knowledge transfer to Defra team member through:

- Involving Defra colleagues in the research design of the interview and surveys
- Inviting active participation from Defra colleagues in UR interviews
- Involving Defra colleagues in the interpretation of findings/emerging themes through weekly check ins
- Support Defra colleagues in developing material to relay the outcomes of the work to internal and external stakeholders including senior civil servants and relevant advisory/steering boards.

Research ethics

We always conduct user research in a safe, ethical way. This means we'll need to work together to ensure we protect participant data by:

- Making sure only the user researcher has full access to participant personal information and the raw data obtained from participants.
- Agreeing where participant raw data is securely stored.
- Anonymising research data within reports and research artefacts that are created.
- Agreeing an appropriate retention period for this data, as per the participant consent form.
- Putting a procedure in place to make sure this data is permanently deleted at the right time. ☐ We protect participants within interviews by:
- Always obtaining informed consent, giving participants the option to stop and withdraw from research at any time.
- Understanding whether participants have any additional needs at an early stage to make sure they can participate fully within any research.
- We protect colleagues conducting user research by:
- Allowing an appropriate amount of time to complete user research interviews with time in between to prepare for the next session.
- Providing opportunities to conduct an interview session debrief with team members and the Head of User Research (where appropriate) where a user researcher can share any worries or concerns.
- Giving user researchers the autonomy to end any user research interview early if they are not comfortable.

Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

We will conduct user research in such a way as to meet any future required Service Assessment, working with DEFRA DDTS colleagues as appropriate to ensure a joined-up approach.

Outputs

The delivery scope of the Service is to deliver:
- An insight deck for JNCC that contains key outputs and findings on the ASM.
- A full user research insight deck(s) for the mNCEA team.
- Details of user groups.
- Details of the user research methodologies used including participant recruitment methods, sampling and research ethics
- User research artefacts that tell a compelling story about what we've learnt from users (which could include personas, mindsets, empathy maps, video clips, audio clips and user journey maps).
- Recommendations around next steps for the programme.
- A series of any high-level user needs (epics) that have been identified which could act as a starting point for any future product development.

The scope of this work also involves taking an active role in any planned show and tell or playback sessions with stakeholders (e.g. DDTS) to regularly communicate progress.

Assumptions and dependencies

- ☐ Defra will provide access to relevant key personnel
- ☐ Defra will provide access to relevant sample lists for all phases of research conducted
- ☐ Defra will be able provide access/licenses to adequate survey software for the quantitative phase of research
- ☐ Methods will have access to all available relevant Defra documentation, information, and communications artefacts for mNCEA as required.
- ☐ Methods will comply with all Government digital service guidelines
- ☐ Defra equipment will be provided where necessary.
- ☐ All work is likely to be undertaken remotely during the assignment timeline.
- ☐ The scope of this work also involves taking an active role in any planned show and tell or playback sessions with stakeholders (e.g. DDTS) to regularly communicate progress.

Risk management

From our experience we would anticipate that the following risks will need to be explored when the project is initiated:

Risk / challenge	Potential mitigation
Securing time from participants, especially DEFRA policy colleagues	Identify priority user groups and their commitments, booking time with participants as soon as possible whilst providing detail about research sessions to get the best from them.

Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Identification and agreement around user group focus	Initial discovery workshop with the team to establish a common understanding of the makeup of the priority and wider user group.
Engagement from key stakeholders including supporting in the recruitment of user research participants	Establish an early dialogue with identified stakeholders, setting out requirements and expectations to help shape our work.
Timely sign off and agreement to meet the agreed timescales	Use an open, iterative approach ensures key team stakeholders have early visibility of deliverables and opportunity to input before submission for sign-off.
Approaching potential participants on numerous occasions for different research work (such as JNCC's Marine Asset Matrix), causing participant fatigue	Join up participant recruitment efforts where possible, including DEFRA DDTS user research colleagues.
Unable to recruit users to engage with over the Christmas period	A break for Christmas and New Year has been factored into the timeline above. Methods and Defra will assess and discuss the number of users available for interviews/engagement in the leadup to Christmas. If the numbers are lower than desired then Methods and Defra will discuss whether to pause the work until after the Christmas break. In this event, the proposed timelines, deliverables and end date of the work will be pushed back accordingly.

Deliverables

All deliverables are set out in the table below:

Deliverable	Success Criteria	Milestone / Date	Owner (who in the delivery team?)
Stage A			
Written summary of desk research findings across both workstreams	Research shared and ratified with key stakeholders	Week 4	mNCEA/JNCC User Researcher
Updated research plans for both workstreams, outlining key research questions and areas of focus	Plans & questions shared and ratified with key stakeholders	Week 4	mNCEA/JNCC User Researcher
Consent form, information sheet and discussion guide for interviews	Participation information shared and ratified with key stakeholders	Week 4	mNCEA/JNCC User Researcher
Completed recruitment schedule for participants for user research interviews across both workstreams	Participation engagement confirmed with key stakeholders	Week 4	mNCEA/JNCC User Researcher

**Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs**

Research interviews across both workstreams to have started	Verbal progress updates for key stakeholders with initial feedback and emerging themes from interviews	Week 4	mNCEA/JNCC User Researcher
Stage B			
All user research interviews conducted across both workstreams	Verbal progress updates for key stakeholders with initial feedback and emerging themes from interviews	Week 8	mNCEA/JNCC User Researcher
Survey delivered on mNCEA work stream	Survey engagement confirmed with key stakeholders	Week 8	mNCEA User Researcher(s)
User stories created across both work streams (including subset for JNCC ASM)	User stories shared and ratified with key stakeholders	Week 8	mNCEA/JNCC User Researcher
Research artefacts delivered across both workstreams	Research artefacts shared and ratified with key stakeholders	Week 8	mNCEA/JNCC User Researcher
Detailed research findings presented to key stakeholders	Research findings presented and signed off by key stakeholders	Week 8	mNCEA/JNCC User Researcher

**Limitations on scope and change control**

Business Area / Supplier to supplement with any additional areas, as deemed appropriate.

Unless instructions to the Supplier are later amended in writing, the work undertaken will be restricted to that set out above. In providing the services detailed above, the Supplier will be acting in reliance on information provided by the Business Area.

The Project Engagement Letter is the agreed contract of work between the Defra Group Business Area and the Supplier and can be varied under the change control process. Any changes to timescales, scope and costs will require approval by DgC.

3. Delivery team

Provide details of the agreed team members including their roles and responsibilities during the project.

爛
Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

█████████████████████████████████████
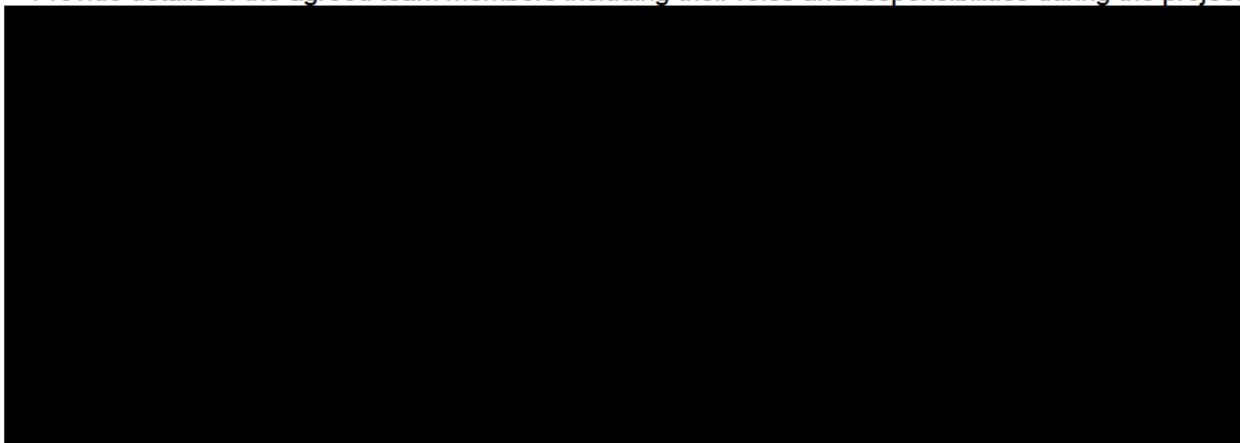
Business Area's team

█████████████████████████████████████

4. Fees

Defra Group will reimburse the Supplier for approved work done according to the table below. The total fees for the scope of work detailed in this Engagement Letter will be £91,110 inclusive of expenses and excluding **VAT**.

█████████████████████████████████████		
Grand Total	£91,110	

Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Expenses statement

Defra Group overarching contract rates include expenses for any travel to/from any UK location defined by the Business Area as the base office for the work. Only expenses for travel at the Business Area's request from this base can be charged. If appropriate, define permissible expenses to be charged.

Payment

The Supplier should invoice fees monthly in arrears. Defra Group will reimburse fees monthly on confirmation of approval of work delivered by the Business Area. The Supplier will keep an accurate record of time spent by staff in providing the services and provide this information and supporting narrative, if requested.

5. Governance and reporting

Business Area to outline governance and report requirements.

As part of the Call-Off Contract, the Supplier and Business Area agree to provide reporting on the following:

- Completion of the time tracker on a monthly basis, to track days worked by our consultants;
- Weekly Project Reporting in line with existing programme governance arrangements – to be reported during mNCEA team meetings.

Key Performance Indicators

Business Area and Supplier to agree any specific key performance indicators related to this specific project engagement.

- **Response times –** The Methods UR team will respond to any enquiries from Defra or JNCC relating to the project within 24 hours.
- **Checkpoints –** Methods will set up weekly checkpoints to update Defra, JNCC and DDTS colleagues on progress, highlight any needs from the Defra family team, and to raise any issues or risks to delivery.
- **Delivery timelines –** Deliverables will not exceed the agreed baseline deliverables unless agreed between both Methods and the Defra mNCEA team.

Feedback and satisfaction

Business Area and Supplier to agree regular reporting intervals for the duration of the engagement.

Defra Group reserves the right to hold review meetings during the assignment, discussing what went well, opportunities for improvement on future assignments and similar. This will incorporate any 'Show and Tell' documentation or transferable products that have been produced.

A post-engagement quality review of the engagement will be arranged where the Business Area rates the services provided.

Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Non-disclosure agreements

The overarching MCF2 framework include NDAs. Insert any additional NDA requirements here.

6. Exit management

The agreed actions and deliverables by the Supplier for when the contract ends are as follows:

Completion of UR Desk and knowledge transfer to identified mNCEA programme team colleagues and completion of all defined deliverables.

Notice period

The nature of these engagements require that Defra Group have the ability to terminate an engagement with notice. Defra Group's termination rights for this engagement are marked below.

The minimum notice period for termination is 5 working days regardless of engagement duration.

1. Business Area identifies a potential need for delivery support, initiates a conversation with DgC, confirms which approvals are required for an engagement to occur, e.g. Consultancy Governance Board if over £100k or DgC Corporate Services Delivery Board if under £100k.

2. Request Form completed by Business Area and submitted to DgC at:

   ███████████████████

3. The form is reviewed by the DgC team around which resource route is most appropriate (e.g. Lots 1/2/3) and may request additional information/edits from the Business Area if required.

4. Lot / Supplier is selected and briefed on the request by DgC, then introduced to the requesting Business Area for further discussion and confirmation of work to be delivered

5. A Project Engagement Letter is completed by the Business Area with input from the Supplier (with supporting proposals as appropriate) and then finally agreed between the two parties, including evidence of all required approvals either being in place or being progressed (e.g. PO) and forwarded to the DgC for review by the Consultancy Governance Board (CGB). Approval states are:

Approval state	Definition	Permissions
Full approval	▪ DPEL agreed ▪ DPEL signed: Supplier, Dept and CO ▪ Purchase Order number	▪ Work can start ▪ Supplier can invoice for work

Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs